FAM Constituency Building Project
Final Summary Report

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Introduction: Food Aid Environment

Since 1954, the United States has been a major contributor of international food relief to combat hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity. Currently the US provides about 10 million metric tons of commodities, valued at more than $2.4 billion, to 82 developing countries around the world (USAID 2000). U S food aid programs are driven not only by international agreements like the Food Aid Convention and the Marrakech decision in the Uruguay Round of negotiations under the GATT, but also by domestic legislation and, most strongly, by domestic policy (Green 2001). The original policy statements and guidelines were set forth in the 1954 Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act, or PL 480. The large majority of international food aid for development and emergencies is supported by Title II of PL 480.

The processes by which Title II commodities are moved from US farmers' land to a field site targeted for food assistance are, Konandreas argues, "an increasingly complex international food aid system…both in logistics and institutions involved (1987, p. 91)." Delivering food assistance requires coordination among commodity suppliers, package manufacturers, domestic transportation and ocean carriers, input from PVO's, the WFP (Faaland 2000), Cooperating Sponsors and foreign governments (CCC 1996). PVO employees must be skilled in a variety of tasks including commodity sales and exchange, shipping and receiving, nutritional analysis, anthropometric data collection and analysis, social project implementation, agricultural and small enterprise development, and often political lobbying (USAID Office of Procurement 1998; Checchi-Lewis Berger 1999).

In the complex system of Title II food aid, there is a large possibility for uncertainty or at least for instability and change, given the large number of system inputs, the number of stakeholders, the multiplicity of locations in which events take place, the amount of reporting, monitoring and evaluation that must occur, and the vast number of transactions involved, particularly in projects that include monetization. Nelson *et al* suggest that with respect to the Title II organizations "the problems encountered in such operations can be truly enormous: for example, complicated negotiations and ordering, international transport lags and bottlenecks, pressures on limited domestic infrastructure capacity, and stock management difficulties. (1981, 6)" The possibility for success in these projects is related to a vast number of changes, many of which are unforeseeable, at the inception of a Title II project (Raikes 1988). Title II organizations must be flexible to accommodate changes and often implement a number of measures to achieve that flexibility.

At PVO headquarters' offices, there are complications associated with the implementation and backstopping of food aid projects. High workload, technical training needs, staff turnover, and extensive travel exacerbate the instability of the environment. Monetization adds an entirely new set of procedures onto an already complex development activity. Context dependent monetization procedures continue to evolve, sometimes introducing uncertainty to development programs on the ground. There are also debates over the use of monetization as an end itself to assist in developing markets in particular areas (Green 2001). Additional uncertainty exists for development programmers who must contend with monetization's uncertain future as an acceptable source of cash for food security programs.

A review of PVO Title II activities provides sufficient examples of uncertainty to indicate that the PVO environment is unstable. Organizational theorists Emery and Trist (1965) term the type of environment in which Title II PVO's work a "turbulent field": a dynamic and volatile environment where changes arise both from within the organization and from the environment. It's difficult to have PVO managers define exactly which parameters are volatile or unstable, though research has shown organizational environments to be 'drivers' of organizational change in a large number of situations. (See Boyd et al 1993, Dill 1958, Downey et al 1975, Duncan 1972, Emery and Trist 1965, Lorenzi et al 1981, Miles and Snow 1978, Milliken 1987 and Williams 2000.) Dill (1958) argues that unstable environments and the ability of managers to gather information about those environments directly affect management behaviors. To gain some understanding of which factors might be driving PVO managers' perceptions of the Title II environment, I asked respondents to complete a "perceived environmental uncertainty" scale modified from Miles and Snow's scale (1978). The average value of the response for the entire scale, adjusted to a 100 point standard, was 49.9, implying that when asked specific questions about the environment, there was only moderate perceived uncertainty. However, if we break the scale into its six sub-scales, we see some differences emerging. PVO representatives believe that availability of funding is unstable (significantly different from the median value), followed by the government's actions, commodity-related activities, other PVOs, food aid recipients and their own PVOs on a continuum of increasing stability.

Coping with environmental uncertainty is usually found to be necessary for organizational viability (Duncan 1972, Hirsch 1998). Research focusing on non-profit, voluntary and collective organizations suggests that organizational responses to uncertain environments may help mitigate the circumstances. These responses might include confining organizational activities to a particular niche within an organizational environment, structuring organizations in ways that accommodate environmental change, encouraging employee flexibility and role generalization within organizations, collaboration between similar organizations, and resource sharing. When there are group goals that must be met in a particular area (such as the development of rigorous monitoring and evaluation measures for Title II projects), sharing resources helps meet them more quickly. For non-profits, sharing resources and collaborating on tasks can maximize the effectiveness of limited resources.

Coordinated action between organizations in a turbulent environment leads to a number of outcomes. One of the primary ones is the convergence of values and beliefs among organizations and organizational employees. Organizations become even more similar than they were before (Emery and Trist 1965, Pennings 1981, Hasenfeld and Gidron 1993, Holm 1998). Collective action also leads to organizational learning and consensus building in other areas of organizational activity and behavior (Kelleher 1996). These activities bring a measure of control into the environment and help stabilize the organizations (Emery and Trist 1965). The collaborative approach is often considered risky because there may not be direct or measurable improvement for an individual organization, though an increased measure of environmental control may result.

When resources are scarce, competition can occur and collaboration can break down. Because of decreasing dollar resources for development work, there is increased competition for food aid commodity resources, which can prohibit interaction and lead to the doubling of efforts and to the inefficient and ineffective use of the resources. One way to ensure collaboration is to create ways in which collaboration is formalized. Peter Holm argues that formalized cooperative agreements emerge as a way for organizations in unstable environments to "reconcile the inherent contradiction between individual and collective

interests (1998, 322).” Many organizational collectives have been created to do just that, a point made by Litwak and Hylton in their analysis of Co-ordinating Agencies.

Individuals who participate in organizational collectives should score high on a collectivity scale. The most widely known scales of individualism and collectivism are scales developed by Wagner (1995) and Earley (1994). Wagner’s scale deals primarily with collaboration in the workplace, while Earley’s scale seeks to measure an individual’s overall ideological tendency toward collective action. From this research, the average response to the Earley Scale, standardized to a 100 point scale, was 53.12, just above average. This signifies that respondents fell into the middle of the continuum of individuality or collectivism with respect to their personal ideologies, not unusual for individuals from varying cultures now living in the United States. The average response to the Wagner scale, which focuses on work activities, was 70.85, significantly higher. This implies that individuals within this particular PVO community consider collective action to be worth pursuing on the job. The contrast between workplace and ideological collectivism scores suggests that personality will ultimately play a large part in the success of collective activities. If collective activities are considered worthwhile in the workplace but individuals’ ideological commitments to collective activity vary widely, then the particular individual involved in the collective activity will make the difference.

FAM Profile

In 1989, AID granted CARE seed money to organize a consortium of Title II food assistance organizations to collaborate while systematizing and codifying knowledge, practice and policy relating to emergency and development assistance. The resulting organization, Food Aid Management (FAM), continues to facilitate collaboration and dissemination of information relevant to the management and operation of food aid and food security programs. FAM’s activities change the competitive environment and encourage friendly competition for resources while stressing the importance of collaborative action, both of which improve the programmatic capacity of the member organizations. The founding members of FAM were the five largest food aid programmers: CARE (the initial and current project holder), Save the Children, ADRA, World Vision, and Catholic Relief Services. The initial proposal explained that there was confusion concerning roles in establishing policies, guidelines and procedures resulting from accountability requirements. FAM would target issues of mutual concern and explore those issues in a collaborative manner leading to increased capacity in policy, accountability and procedure development on the PVO side (FAM 1989). Today, FAM has grown to encompass sixteen PVO’s involved in Title II programming (FAM 2002). FAM participants agree that through collaboration, this inter-organizational consortium has contributed to streamlining food aid policy and procedure in an area where a diversity in goals and management styles could have easily paralyzed positive change (Green 2001).

This report outlines trends in FAM’s history and some of FAM’s primary accomplishments. These accomplishments have been interactive and collaborative, their execution impossible without the involvement of each of the member organizations. There have also been institutional accomplishments: FAM activities have led to structural and behavioral changes in the Title II milieu that encourage cooperation. The focus of the report is to identify the ways in which FAM supports the building of a food aid constituency, explore the breadth and depth of that constituency, and identify ways that constituency development activities can be used to their full extents. Quantitative data corroborate qualitative results presented in previous reports on the Title II environment, FAM’s history and FAM’s current activities. The purpose of these quantitative analyses was not just to

generate pages of numbers and tables to support qualitative findings. The greater end is to use these findings to suggest some possible next steps to improve FAM's activities as a constituency-building organization. The conclusion of the paper presents these next steps, based on applied research on building collaborative capacity in organizations and my own experience over the past year with FAM.

FAM's activities are based entirely on collaborative activity and information exchange. Therefore, FAM relies almost completely on those individuals who participate in those activities for successful execution of tasks set in annual operating plans. As a consortium, FAM works closely with its members to define activities and promote the progress of activities to meet agreed-upon goals. These activities include the implementation of working groups collaborating on common priorities for members, namely: Monitoring and Evaluation (MNE), Monetization (MNTZ), Local Capacity Building (LCB), and the Environment (EWG). FAM also manages the Food Security Resource Center (FSRC), publishes the *Food Forum* bulletin, maintains an active website and implements other food security information sharing activities including workshops and listserves. FAM's activities do not fall into the purview of food aid programming or development activities *per se*, only into the support and facilitation of operational and management activities associated with food aid programming. The FAM members have viewed and continue to perceive FAM, created largely as a forum in which Title II PVO's could collaborate and exchange food aid/security program information, to be a uniquely valuable venue for exchange of new tools and best practices. FAM's constituency provides input on many subjects in a vast, uncertain topical area. FAM enables the community to identify common operational standards, cooperate in programming and management, and participate in open dialogue.

One of FAM's primary functions is to facilitate collaboration between Title II Cooperating Sponsors on topics relevant to improving food aid activities. FAM member organization representatives were asked to evaluate FAM's activities with respect to how successful they were in encouraging constituency building, either through cooperative action or through information sharing and exchange. Every food aid professional interviewed believed that FAM's ability to provide access to the most up-to-date technical information is increasingly important to PVO activities. To evaluate FAM's constituency building activities, each of FAM's activities was presented and respondents were asked to rate them using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most successful. None of FAM's activities earned a modal response below the midpoint score of 3. The information exchange activities, including the web site and it's associated content and links earned top modal responses of 5. The FSRC and associated information requests also earned high modal responses, as did Food Forum, some of the working groups and a few of the list serves. Among the working groups, the monitoring and evaluation working group is considered the most successful in encouraging and utilizing collaborative activity, followed by the monetization, environment and local capacity building working groups in that order. Of the list serves, the most successful in terms of encouraging information exchange is the all FAM list serve, followed by the environment list serve, monitoring and evaluation, local capacity building, monetization, nutrition and commodity management, in that order. Web site content is considered the best means of information exchange of the FSRC activities, followed by web site links, information requests and finally Food Forum.

The goal of many of FAM's activities is to create documents useful to the FAM constituency. When technical information is not present, FAM spearheads campaigns to gather, synthesize and disseminate information, so that organizations can be prepared to complete their food aid projects. An initial outgrowth of FAM's information exchange function was the Food Aid Resource Material Clearinghouse begun in 1990, now called the

Food Security Resource Center, where FAM maintains a library of food aid and food security resources (FAM Archive Binder 1). The FSRC is one of the oldest and most reliable means of coordinating information exchange. The number and diversity of contributors over time has increased, as has the number and diversity of requestors. This trend seems unlikely to change as the FSRC's reputation as a strong food security resource grows, particularly for those non-FAM organizations and individuals who seem most likely to utilize this resource. The online FSRC database and digitized resources will serve to make this resource more important as technology in the developing world.

FAM meetings, whether steering committee, working groups, brown bags or workshops, serve a number of purposes. First they disseminate technical information so that member organizations work together to locate, synthesize and communicate new developments. Second, FAM meetings enable employees with structural or role equivalence from different organizations to meet and work together. This formal and informal interaction cannot be underestimated. It allows for the sharing of resources, information and experiences that standardizes the Title II environment at the headquarters level. The final portion of the quantitative phase of research was focused on collecting data on organizational interactions within the bounds of FAM activities. This was to gain an understanding of the underlying structure of the FAM constituency before developing relevant next steps to strengthen FAM's constituency building activities.

Applied researchers often use 'social network' approaches in this capacity (Hasenfeld and Gidron 1993, Kwait et al 2001, Litwak and Hylton 1962, Pennings 1981) particularly centrality and core/periphery analyses (Marsden 1990). Centrality measures, specifically closeness, provide a researcher with insight into how tightly organizations are linked each other within a network. This measure indicates how other organizations perceive the particular set of social interactions, and generally reflects social reality. Core/periphery analysis highlights the areas of most relationship density in a network. These network measures provide an indication of which organizations are likely to be the active experts in a particular area of interaction, and can serve as indicators of where an organization might like to concentrate improvements. The next few paragraphs summarize the structure of FAM's interactive networks in general and then more specifically, focusing on the Steering Committee, the working groups, and then on formal and informal Title II interactions.

With regard to FAM activities in general, one notices that the core of organizations, includes the five original members as well as some smaller, younger organizations. Interestingly, FHI emerges as a highly central organization, likely because of their role as head of the Steering Committee, their leadership roles in the working groups, their Information Services capabilities and the related mentoring relationship with FAM, their hosting of FAM's web site, and their high responsiveness to FAM-related concerns.

FAM Steering Committee activities involve a limited number of FAM member organizations and affect only the FAM members, but have a strong impact on FAM's work. The Steering Committee, which was once confined to the five original members of FAM, has recently become more open to other member organizations. This was the primary outcome of the new by-laws and rotating committee membership scheme. Here, the core includes the five original FAM organizations, together with the first two chairs of the new Steering Committee (FHI and Africare). The rotating Steering Committee (and the rotating working group chairs) enables PVO representatives to develop their leadership capabilities and to work together at the headquarters level, which may translate into more cooperation and collaboration at the project and field levels (FAM 2000b, Green 2001). Over time, as more organizations come to take leadership positions within the Committee, this core group will likely grow to encompass all member organizations, creating a more united FAM constituency.

FAM's working groups are a direct result of member needs for documentation and tools in important topic areas. The first working groups began in 1990, but the groups were reorganized in 1998 at the beginning of FAM's current ISA agreement as a result of FAM's important meeting at Coolfont, West Virginia (Green 2001, FAM Archive Binder 3-4, Archive Box 1). FAM working group activities (meetings, products and workshops) incorporate the activities of the entire FAM membership and provide opportunities for the development of individual and organizational capacity. Working group activities may also reach a broader constituency, both member organizations' field offices and other organizations and individuals in the broader food security environment. Working groups remain important activities for FAM because they enable ongoing interaction (Green 2001).

Current working groups focus on local capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, monetization, and environmental compliance. The results of the centrality analysis for the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group (in Table 5, below) suggest that the leaders of the group, and those organizations with the deepest institutionalized expertise are once again among the largest and oldest of the organizations, save FHI. FHI's position may be ensured as the result of strong leadership in the working group early on. With respect to the Monetization Working Group, the organizations that emerge as core are the larger organizations that are most deeply involved with monetization matters. They are likely to have been most involved with developing FAM's monetization manual and/or to have created monetization resources of their own. Here, too, we see that the organizations that have taken leadership positions within the working group (Africare, CRS, and ADRA) are in the core. The Local Capacity Building Working Group has a very small core, composed primarily of organizations who have taken leadership roles in the group (CRS, ADRA, Counterpart) and others who are involved most in capacity building in their programmatic activities. Though the Environmental Working group has not been officially recognized by AID as a FAM working group, the membership has noted that the group's collaborative activities and the information exchange encouraged by the list serve are important and successful. The group is largely responsible for developing environmental compliance guidelines for Title II cooperating sponsors and for establishing the training associated with those guidelines. Those organizations that form the core are those with significant interests in environmental issues or those that have taken leadership roles (CARE, CRS, WV, ADRA, AFRICARE, ACDI).

Since 1997, FAM has been developing a number of effective means of electronic communication (FAM Archive Binder 2-3; Archive Box 1). Each of the Working Groups uses listserves to provide efficient and specialized dissemination of information and questions to selected individuals within the FAM constituency. FAM listserves, though possibly the fastest and most reliable means of communication within the food aid constituency, have been used primarily for communication of logistical and operational information. The content of these listserves could be developed over time, which may happen as individuals become more comfortable with the idea of communicating via this channel.

FAM also encourages the sharing of experience through its journal, Food Forum, which focuses on items of topical interest to those involved in Title II activities. FAM has published nearly sixty issues of Food Forum since late 1989. Initially a newsletter providing updates on FAM activities, calendars of events, and field-experience reports, Food Forum became more focused on topics of immediate interest to Title II staff. Food Forum provides a space for the discussion of timely food security topics, and incorporates submissions both from FAM members and the larger food aid community. Nearly a thousand issues of Food Forum reach food security organizations and professionals, though the large majority reach FAM member organizations' field offices.

The FAM web site is the final means by which FAM operates to build and maintain a constituency of food security interests. The FAM site draws together resources in a usable interface, and links food aid professionals to them. By linking thousands of visitors yearly to hundreds of food security documents and organizations, FAM provides the structural opportunity for large amounts of information to be exchanged almost continuously. The information includes the web sites of the member organizations, relevant databases, commodity management sites and other technical resources. The site provides a virtual community for the members of FAM and other organizations and extends FAM's ability to coordinate collaborative activities further into the field, a need identified by many FAM and food aid experts contacted (Green 2001). Trends evident in website use imply that this site is growing in popularity not only at the headquarters level, but also at the field level. Providing more links on the site will only improve this channel for constituency building.

The most important contribution that FAM has made is in creating an environment that fosters collaboration and in facilitating that collaboration in ways that have kept the spirit alive in the face of increasing pressure for competition. There are two primary avenues for the creation of a collaborative spirit that must be supported: structural opportunities for interaction and the environment in which collaboration is considered the norm. Before FAM, the Title II Cooperating Sponsors primarily worked independent of each other, though there were operational issues of mutual concern. In the twelve years that FAM has existed, collaboration has become the expected behavior when these issues arise rather than the exception to the rule. FAM provides the physical space for interaction to occur, through meetings, projects, brown bags, and workshops that encourage interaction, and creates the structural potential for sharing experiences and knowledge. In effect, FAM integrates the institutional memory of all its members so that it can be drawn on by any individual. FAM's collaborative activities also help to mitigate loss if institutional memory by providing a storehouse of technical information that extends far beyond 1989 (FAM FSRC, FAM 2002).

Outside the bounds of formal FAM groups, member organizations contact each other for advice on Title II issues, whether related to policy, procedure, reporting, compliance or any number of related issues. Some of those organizations have formal or informal collaborative agreements with each other, and many of them with diverse activity portfolios interact with each other in the nonprofit world but outside of Title II activities. Nine of the sixteen FAM organizations appear to comprise a 'core' with respect to Title II advice interactions. The first conclusion that can be drawn about that core is that these organizations are the most knowledgeable and experienced with these issues. However, this is the not most important conclusion. The large core also implies that there is a significant and growing community of Title II organizations likely to develop common opinions, perspectives and procedures. The large core group also indicates that in the past twelve years, Title II PVOs have come to interact not just through formal channels, but also through informal channels. This is not to say that interaction, information exchange, cooperation and collaboration did not exist before, or that currently they are perfect. However, interactions seem to be improving and increasing over time. If that is the case, then FAM (and other PVO groups) is achieving its goal of encouraging collaboration through formal means, and exceeding its goal by encouraging collaboration through informal channels.

Conclusion: Next Steps

Cooperation and collaboration do not arise simply because the opportunity exists. In an environment where cooperation is not traditionally accepted, it takes work to encourage that kind of interaction. One means to support collective activity in an environment that is friendly to collaboration but in which it may not receive total individual commitment is to

formalize the collaboration within work plans. When collective action is formalized, there are means to monitor and evaluate that collaboration, well-defined avenues for collaboration, and defined roles for each player in the collective. Until collaboration becomes systematic and institutionalized, this is the most successful means of ensuring cooperation, given the high rate of turnover in the PVO community and the variability of personal commitment to collaboration. At the outset, FAM's activities were seen as good, but collaborative procedures were not in place. Since that time, FAM member organizations have improved their abilities to work toward a common goal and to reach consensus quickly (Green 2001).

Organizations with FAM's structure and collaborative activity have been increasing in frequency. Researchers are working to understand the reasons why these organizations are arising, how they are structured, what the defining characteristics are and how these organizations can ensure their success. (See Heydebrand 1989, Rotschild and Russell 1986, Rothschild-Whitt 1979, Srivastva and Cooperrider 1986, Waters 1993.) The comments below build on that research and fall within a previously suggested framework of behaviors reported as relevant and important to building collaborative capacity (Foster-Fishman 2001). Because FAM's activities are interactive, and the member organizations *are* essentially FAM, some next steps suggest ways that *member organizations* can help improve FAM's activities.

FAM, and the member organizations that make up FAM, can improve the stability of their working environment by improving transparency, accountability, information sharing and general knowledge of each others' programs in the Title II environment and outside of it. Providing opportunities for interaction and information sharing while aiming to solve common problems of procedure and compliance is likely one of the best means for achieving that goal. If FAM is to encourage interaction as suggested above, then FAM will have to overcome the tension between a generalized support for collective action and individual support for collaboration. Until collaboration is institutionalized and encouraged by the donor (or even linked to available development funds) there must be viable alternatives. **The easiest alternative is to formalize the collaborative relationships between FAM member organizations and FAM. The previous ISA was based on letters of support from each of the member agencies, and this should be a cornerstone of the new funding proposal as well. To ensure more clarity, the Steering Committee, in preparing the new FAM proposal, should develop a set of minimum requirements for participation, taking into account variation among member PVOs with regard to size, age, location, and funding levels. FAM by-laws should also be modified to reflect pertinent changes**. Those guidelines, then, should be incorporated into each member organization's own ISA funding proposal. This is not to increase the amount of work, reporting or responsibilities of the various member organizations. It is merely to formalize, systematize and build into the donor monitoring and evaluation system activities that these organizations are already completing.

The evaluation of FAM's activities reveals that information exchange activities are considered the most successful constituency-building activities. **In the next years of grant funding, FAM should focus on improving collaboration among the PVOs with respect to the working groups and other interactive pursuits to ensure that the interactive activities become more successful. FAM acts only in the role of facilitator of collaborative activities, and so the member organizations must also commit to increasing the effectiveness of the working groups. Additionally, working groups that have the flexibility to meet the changing needs of PVOs will encourage greater participation, and would therefore increase the success of FAM as coordinator and constituency builder. Greater flexibility would also allow the working groups to meet the more immediate policy and procedure needs of the FAM member organizations.**

The Steering Committee should develop guidelines for creating greater working group flexibility that can be built into the upcoming proposals for funding.

Constituency-building is the primary focus of this project, and is the primary goal of FAM as an agency. The coordinating position that FAM serves is secondary to fostering an environment in which a common base of knowledge is shared, common procedures can be developed and common goals can be achieved. In an environment of decreasing development funding (in dollars) it is likely that cooperation and collaboration will be encouraged and perhaps even linked to funding in the future. FAM's activities, then, provide an opportunity for PVOs to improve their own capacities for collaboration and cooperation and begin the process of institutionalizing those activities throughout their organizations. **To expand constituency building activities, or develop a more united constituency, peripheral organizations should be encouraged to participate more fully in FAM activities, either through leadership roles in FAM activities or partnerships with core organizations already in leadership positions in FAM groups.**

The qualitative and quantitative phases of this research have shown that the Title II environment, though not completely stable, is stable enough to encourage cooperative and collaborative activity. Recent research suggests that coordination among PVOs does improve programming effectiveness, though PVOs could do more to achieve even greater results (Owada et al 1998). This indicates that circumstances are favorable for a push to encourage even more collective activity. Generalized support for collaboration from the PVO community, and from the donor, provide more encouragement for collaborative activities than ever before. The large variation in individual commitment to collaboration and cooperation is a surmountable obstacle in FAM's goal of building a Title II constituency. **Building on the past successes and incorporating a few adjustments to an organization's current trajectory is one of the best ways to encourage gradual growth and development in an organization (Grenier 1972). Using that framework, FAM (and thus the FAM member organizations) has the opportunity to take an even larger role in the creation of a constituency united in its dedication to improving Title II programming through collaborative means.**